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## Army trumps Navy



(photo by David Allen)

by Ken Holliday

On a frosty, clear night in front of 1,500 rugby fans, Army proved they were the better team by downing Navy 30-22 in a well executed match Saturday in Arnold, MD. Army now leads the series 2-1-1.

Siegert Field served as an excellent venue for the occasion. With a touch of professionalism, thankfully becoming more common on the American rugby scene, game programs were issued, food booths were open, teams were introduced over the public address system, Naval Academy [midshipman] served as the color guard, and following a moment of silence, the National Anthem was sung beautifully. Several hundred boisterous West Point cadets formed a tunnel for the Army ruggers to run through marking their entrance. Anticipation filled the air.

In a game featuring significant momentum swings, Army came out firing on all cylinders while Navy seemed road weary. Navy failed to clear the opening kick. Army counter-attacked with conviction, quickly earning a penalty kick in front of the goal posts. Army's Brendan McCarthy slotted the kick (3-0 Army). Army systematically made touch on the return kickoff. Navy then paid for missing their line-out. Army's captain Nate Pototschnik, a force the entire game, drove the

ball past midfield where scrum-half Dave Ledwick quickly recycled, sending a skip pass to bursting center Caleb Goble for the try. McCarthy was true again, 10-0 Army seven minutes into the game. McCarthy and Navy's Chase Hobbe traded penalties. 13-3 in favor of Army. Goble scored again on a hard charging run at the 22 minute mark, with McCarthy converting (20-3). Army was well in control a quarter into the match.

Up to this point, a well-coached Army side owned all phases of play. They drove through the tackles, played on their feet and took the ball at pace. Conversely, this was not the same Navy side who took on Air Force last month. For the first 30 minutes of the game, Navy played lethargically.

With about ten minutes remaining in the half, a short lived fracas seemed to awaken Navy. Once Navy started playing ball-control, driving, multi-phased rugby, their confidence visibly grew. Navy was rewarded with a shot at goal, but Hobbe's attempt was wide. Navy's sustained pressure paid off as lock Trevor McLemore touched down. Hobbe's conversion was true (20-10 Army). Hobbe's final attempt at the half was also wide. Halftime Army 20-10.

Navy kept ball possession and used the field smartly to open the second half. Their hard, multi-phased play was rewarded with an unconverted try by winger Lane Drummond (20-15 Army). Navy's inspired play did not allow Army into their half until 18 minutes remained. Navy captain Jake Womble at eightman and scrum-half Sam Marone showed pace, vision and teamwork as they kept attacking Army's zone and maintained possession. Unfortunately for Navy, and credit to Army's defense, they were unable to convert 22 minutes of ball possession and field position into more than five points.

The final momentum swing was initiated by the sin-binning (for repeat offenses) of hard-running Navy center Kevin Peterson. Army started

exerting pressure in the scrum and stealing line-out ball, while their backline returned to form. McCarthy nailed another penalty (23-15). With seven minutes remaining, Army fullback Cheffren Canady's counterattack saw him create a two man overload at the 30m line, however hesitation and a late pass resulted in a lost opportunity. With five minutes remaining and Army pressuring, flyhalf Andy Locke read and perfectly intercepted a flat Navy pass to streak 40m for the clinching try, converted by McCarthy (30-15). Navy responded with guts and toughness as replacement flanker Dane Sagerholm scored a try at full time. Hobbe's conversion was good. Final score Army 30 Navy 22.

Special acknowledgement goes to Army team captain and Maryland native Nate Pototschnik. He is the real deal. His work rate and speed increased as the game wore on. His ability to read play was evident by his positioning and high tackle count.

The overall penalty count was 16 to Navy and seven to Army. Referee Warren Quennell, assisted by touch judges Bob Leamon and Pete Long, supported a fast paced, free-flowing game much to the appreciation of the crowd and the players. The first scrum didn't occur until 17 minutes into the game with the second coming at the 26th minute. There were less than ten scrums the entire game.

Although Navy had opportunities to keep the score closer, Army was the better team on the day. Army's defense and team maturity saw them withstand Navy's pressure. Navy showed their backline youth at times with uncertainty in the first half and over-excitement in the second half. Regardless of the final score, it was a game and venue worthy of two top-ten teams.

Putting the game into perspective was the unit patch sewn onto Army hooker Fred Waage's jersey. The patch came directly from the Class A uniform of Army Captain Jim Gurbisz, West Point Class of 2002 who was killed in Iraq on 4 November. At his funeral last Monday at Arlington National Cemetery, Capt Gurbisz's widow presented the patch to Army Coach Rich Pohlidal.

"On the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that on other days and other fields will bear the fruits of victory." – Gen Douglas MacArthur.

### **Army**

1 Sam Ketchum 2 Fred Waage 3 Chris Wallgren (replaced by JP Flachs blood sub 1st half) 4 Nick Nussdorfer 5 Tony Desmarais 6 Kenny Johnson 7 Nate Pototschnik (Capt) 8 Jay Bengen (replaced by Nate Pepper – 68 mins) 9 Dave Ledwick 10 Andy Locke 11 Brendan McCarthy 12 Byron Fulau 13 Caleb Goble 14 John Patten 15 Cheffren Canady

### **Navy**

1 Ian Uber 2 Matt Reichl (replaced by Gonzalez – 54 mins) 3 Steve Schmitt 4 Blake Lindsay 5 Trevor McLemore 6 Tom Ragsdale (replaced by Dabe Sagerholm – 54 mins) 7 Gene Paul 8 Jake Womble (Capt) 9 Sam Marone 10 Graham Cleveland 11 Lane Drummond 12 Kevin Petersen 13 Mike Humara 14 Chase Hobbe 15 Eric McElvaney